

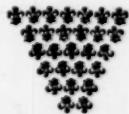
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A SERMON Preached before the KING AT NEW MARKET *October 8. 1671.*

By the Honourable
J OHN N ORTH
Fellow of *Jesus College in Cambridge.*

Printed by his Majesties special Command.



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ИОМЯЕВ

ДАЛА

САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ



БИБЛИОТЕКА

САНКТ-ПЕТЕРБУРГ



Psalm the 1. verse the 1.

*Blessed is the man that walketh not in the
Counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth
in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the
seat of the scornful.*

WE need not wonder that vice should engross a great parcel of the world, if we consider that we are all endowed with a freedom of will, which may easily be perverted by the flattering enjoyment that an unlawful action does present. It has been already, and will always be the constant humour of every Generation that passes, to complain of its own Times as the latter Dayes, as the dregs of an Iron Age which by a vast disproportion has outlasted the other three of a purer metal.

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But

But the more deplorable things are, the higher care we should employ to keep our selves unspotted from the general stain ; that we may neither be allured by pleasure, nor invited by an evil and numerous example ; which as it is ever dangerous, so chiefly, when men are not content to be wicked, unless they offer to justify it too. Heretofore, though they engaged in courses full as bad, yet they did not throw off all sense of Religion : they retained still their esteem of goodness, confessed their infirmity , and sometimes intermingled fits of a severe Repentance ; so that it might admit of a favourable construction , to proceed rather from a strong and unreclaimed temper than a deliberate intent. But now many abroad embrace Immorality as a profession; transact it in the face of the world without the least remorse ; study the highest provocation ; boast of their horrid attempts ; proclaim as a matter of Glory, to what a *stress* of impiety, to what a *Violence* of sin, their mind does submit and their body will endure.

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dure. 'Tis their *Counsel*, as the Psalmist calls it, that which they pursue upon the maturest thoughts: 'Tis their *way*, the path they are resolved to tread. Nor are they looser in their lives then in their Principles and Discourse. They would hide a naughty practice by the unsettledness of their mind: They would vanquish *fear* altogether, that it might not steal in upon them, when their head is heavy or their spirits are exhausted: And so, they seat themselves in the *Chair of the scornful*: turn Religion into a jest: play with sacred things: use the inspired Volume as a Topick, from whence they raise their unsavoury wit: They brandish some pitiful objections against Religion, which have been confuted a thousand times: they list themselves under some Champion or other, who has been reported to espouse their cause: his arguments they manage: his Phrases they cite, though they understand them not.

Now although the exposing of their rashness may seem a subject improper for an Auditory,

ditory, that expresses so much devotion as to fill these sacred places; yet since 'tis the frailty of our Nature to regard less the proffer of happiness than a representation of danger; I cannot better confirm the Vertuous in the excellent choice they have made, than by disparaging the contrary vices: this being the very manner our Psalmist takes of describing the godly. I shall therefore for the entertainment here, endeavour to shew the mischief to which that *Counsel* betrays, the dismal mansion to which *that way* does lead, and what a vain security the deceitful *Chair of the scornful* does afford; which for the clearer Method I shall distinguish into these two Parts, levelling the one against a *diffolute*, the other against a *profane* kind of life: And intending to demonstrate, how inconsistent *they both* are with the least pretence to Religion, how unsatisfactory in respect to an ordinary prudence, and how unable to promote the design for which they are followed.

A man's way is not in his own hands:
As

As for the former of these, I must in I.
the first place offer to your serious Reflexion, that as sure as another state succeeds
this here on earth, so certainly a debauched
person will miscarry. Amongst the many
subdivided Parties which discompose our
Christian Profession, we shall find this ac-
knowledged on every hand: what ever sort
of Opiniators we admire, among whom-
soever we enroll our Name, there prevails
an obligation to a Virtuous life. Though
we disagree in the means how it is attained;
though we dispute how far it sufficeth, yet
every side grants the Necessity, and that
without it no entrance can be procured into
Heaven. It is this, by which each novel
Sect gains Proselytes: by which every sink-
ing faction supports its credit, whilst by a
strict observance of what is equally enforced
by all, they draw the simple into their re-
mote and more dangerous Tenets. If we
travel beyond Christendome and search in-
to the customes of those who do either now
or have of old pretended to another Reve-

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lation;

lation ; as many countries as we survey, so many concurring suffrages we may gather up. None ever exercised a Religion, who did not place in sobriety the most proper Service : None ever owned a life hereafter, who did not by that determine the happy or miserable condition there. Nay though a foolish suspicion should arise within our breast concerning the truth of a particular Dispensation ; yet this other engagement we could never remove, as that which Nature her self has implanted in us, as that which constitutes a part of our Reason as much as any Notice or Axiome in speculative Learning. We frame as evident a conception of good and evil, as of *like* or *unlike*, *simple* or *compound* ; and are as fully perswaded that we must avoid the *one* and pursue the *other*, as that *the whole does exceed the part* : both advanced beyond further proof. And since none but the Founder of the Universe can have imbued us with such intimations, we must esteem them as his eternal Law ; to which if the recompence always annexed
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be not evenly distributed here, it must wait for us in another place. Nor as to these duties of our Natural light, can any plead the least colour of an excuse. They are not involved in a forreign tongue, not purchased from beyond the seas, or transmitted by an uncertain Tradition: but what he reads in a large and lively Character within himself; by which alone it pleased God to govern far the greatest part of the Earth till our Saviours time: and when he did impart a new discovery, it seemed chiefly to aim at the renewal of this Image, which superstition had defaced. For though he imposed those minute Ceremonies with so severe a charge upon the Jews; yet when not offered up together with a moral Virtue, he throws them back with the greatest disdain, as if he had never enjoyned them.

To urge then the inference: How stupendious a piece of folly does the Dissolute commit, who neglects what is commended by an Universal consent? who stiffly adheres to a certain sect of Opinions, who fondly

observes the little Punctilio's that discriminate his Party, and still omits what is allowed by all. If we should perchance err in other things, so as it flowes not from a peevish and contradicting spirit, or is contracted by an almost invincible Ignorance, we know not how far the throne of Heaven may dispence : But what tolerable evasion can he invent, who lives directly opposite to what his reason prescribes, to what all Revelation adds a fresh command, and which has been the onely point preserved entire from the least dispute ? He is not onely involved in the fortune of his own Sect, nor onely in danger from the falseness of his own Religion : but whatever proves true, if there be at all any judgement hereafter, the sentence of Condemnation must pass upon him. So that we may justly conclude, such Desperadoes as these do it out of a confidence that there is no Religion; to whom in the second place I address my self.

H They hope to avoid the Censure for their debauchery by casting it on their Principles ;

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ciples; because men, they think, will not so much condemn their lives as the source from whence it rises, their horrid unbelief: for which they rather assume a pride, as if they had a greater sagacity than their neighbours, that they are not deluded with the common Imposture, which has so long abused the world. But may we not suspect they proceed in a more preposterous way? Do they not first rashly overwhelm themselves in vice, and then allay their fears by such a persuasion? do they not first discard a good Conscience, and then make shipwreck concerning the Faith, in Saint Paul's language? then shake off Religion when 'tis their Interest there should be none? lest any relenting thoughts should disturb their sober and melancholly intervals, whilst their body weaken'd by a former sin recovers strength enough to perpetrate another. What clearer argument can we have of this then when we see young Boys lost in wickedness before they attain to years of discretion: who give the first instance of their apprehension

in naughtiness, and by a corruption of mind imbued through the example of others, draw on a Maturity sooner than Nature ever intended. And really we may in the general observe, that most tainted with this infidelity have consumed their earlier years in luxury : so that they entred on it before their judgement was ripe, and have not spared any leisure since from their enjoyments. And can we imagine these have fully discussed the merits of the cause ? or are they indeed fit to decide the question concerning Religion ? Can they have weighed every demonstration ? or examined each consequence ? If we would presume to debate it, we must first furnish our heads with all parts of Learning ; A huge acuteness in Philosophy, a vast reading in History and Philology must conspire in such an enterprise, the preparing of which would take up the largest portion of our time.

How silly a rashness does it then import to fix an hasty Conclusion ; which one would avoid even where no other mischief could

could follow but a bare mistake? And how much more to build on so weak a Foundation, a resolution of life, on which depends an Eternal concern? It is therefore the hope of a freedome from Rule, of a security from a troubled Conscience that diminishes the Faith. Experience attests how much in business of lesser moment, our advantage governs our Belief; how readily we fancy, what we desire should be. And besides, in our present case vve lie more open to an easy abuse, vwhen vve have abated the vigour of our Parts by a continual distemper. Let them shew by a sober deputation, that they hugg not those desperate maximes for their profit; and then I question not, they vwill relish sounder things.

Hovver all this study to cheat our selves vwill avail nothing; perhaps the heat of youth, the briskness of spirit, and constant diversion of our mind by some disorder or other may stifle, may lull asleep our Reason, may induce a kind of stupidity: But vwhen either sickness shall interrupt or age quite abolish

abolish our pleasures, how then shall we secure our amazing thoughts ? The advantage which beguiled us before, will cease, and our judgement return to its former quickness : we shall see the inconvenience of a precipitated sentence : we shall sadly perceive upon how prejudiced a ground we proceeded before : we shall understand the certainty of that, which with such confidence we lately derided ; and to that fence will be joyned the affrighting horrour of a suspended life. This has been the fate of all the associates, the Copartners in unbelief, if they have ever reached the * years of a declining age , or did not expire their last in a Duel or a drunken fit. Though they dared heaven before, though they invented affronts to Religion, and thought themselves

* Plato does thus incomparably bespeak the young Atheist, Ὡ πᾶς, νέος· σεμβάν δέ στὸ χρύσῳ πεῖσθαι πολλὰ ὅν τινὰ δοξάζεις μεταβαλόντα, ὃν τιναντία τίσεις, πείσματος ἐν εἰς τόποις κριτικῶν τῷ μεγίστω γίγνεσθαι. οὐγίστων δέ, οὐ τινῶν διδέντων τῷ μεγάλῳ σοὶ, πά, τοῖς τούτοις ὄρθοις διακενθίνει τὸν εγκλησίαν μή, πράτοις δέ τοι αυτοῖς ἐν τῷ μεγάλῳ σοὶ μίσινοι εἴναι ἀν ποτε φωνεῖς Φειδίος τὸ πείσματος· εἰ σοῦ μόνῳ Θεῷ δέ οἱ σοὶ εἰλοι πειθώντων καὶ πράτον ταῦτα δίξεις τοῖς Σιωπαῖς· οὐχίσκουσι δέ αὖτε σπλεῖν δὲ ἐλάττον ταῦτα πάν τινον θέλοντες. τὸ δέ τοι πάντα σοὶ παραγγελοῦσις αὐτῷ παλλοῖς φρέσκοις ἀν. τὸ μακρύνα πάποτε λαβόντα εἰς ταῦτα πάν τινον δίξεις μεῖς θεάρ, οὐδὲ τοῖς, διαπλέσαι φέρεις γῆγες μέγατα εἰς ταῦτα τῇ διανοίᾳ.

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fortified against the strongest impression, yet upon a languishing bed or the apprehension of an imminent danger, they have altered their mind, revoked their sentiments, and declared their change to the whole world. I need not heap up instances with which all History does abound; but rather press we would not buy consternation and repentance at so dear a rate: that we would not nourish an incredulous humour, till at last it recedes of its self, and leaves behind the piercing fence of our unavoidable ruine.

But that I may beat them out of their utmost Refuge; Suppose we should for once and in a frolick allow them as strong an evidence as they desire: suppose we should grant ten nay *an hundred to one* on their side against Religion, which is more then their boldest patrons ever assumed, who could never drive it higher then an even ballance,

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or

*Bion the Atheist falling sick, πελαστρα λευ
Γενι επειδη και ματαγματον επ' οις επιλυ-
μέλαινον ει το θεον. And therefore Laertius
prettily plays upon him with his Poetry.
Marcus δι' ος οντας, προτερον Μιχαηλον το θεον
ον θεον, Ως ην θεον οντας Βιων θεον
ρουτιζεν.*

or a faint possibility there might perhaps be none. Notwithstanding these unreasonable odds, the lying under an Eternal torment is of so hideous a Nature, as a prudent man would not venture it, though placed in the remotest degree of chance. What though an hundred things may happen as soon? yet since we are utterly undone for ever if it should fall out: since we must be wrapt up in immortal flames, who would foolishly run the hazard. Especially considering how little is lost; though we should cleanse our hands in vain: though we should restrain our exorbitant passions for nothing: or to no purpose pass over the few years of our race in a Vertuous carriage. And then having behaved our selves well, with what cheerfulness shall we resign our breath at last in that saying of *Socrates*, which indeed he spoke not so much out of distrust, as an affectation of

"Οπιδέτοι παρός θεός δισπίτις πάνυ ἀγαθής οὐχεῖν, εὖ λέσσει, εἴπερ πάλλος τοιεῖται, σιγηνεούμενος αὐτῷ πάσσον. — οὐλά' ένελπίσει μετρητὴν τοῖς πετελευτικόσι, καὶ οὐδὲ τοὺς πάλαι λέγεται τοὺς ἀμενοὺς τοῖς ἀγαθοῖς οὐ τοῖς γακοῖς.

Plat. Phaed.

doubting

doubting every thing, If there be another State after this ; I have a title to Happiness : If none, I cannot be Miserable.

Πονητές δέ τινες ἀγονῶν αὐτὸν εἴρουσιν γέ τοι Σάτιστρόν εῖται τὸ πενθανόν. οὐ γέ τοι μηδὲν εἴρουσιν κατὰ λεγόμενα μεταβολῆς της πυγμᾶς εἰς κακήν μετοίκησις τῆς φύσεως τῆς τοπικῆς ἐνθύμησις αὐλον πέποι, &c. Platon. Apol.

Thirdly, a disordered life must fall under III. the greatest imprudence without any respect to Religion at all. For though we had a demonstrative assurance, though none had ever dreamed of such a thing as Devotion : yet debauchery cannot correspond with an ordinary policy. For if this life onely supports us in a being, if no better Part survives, but all sinks into the dust together vvith the body ; vve should certainly apply the most sedulous care for the presevance of this Frame. Nature has ingrafted into our very contexture an indelible desire of Continuance ; so that if vve renounce all other hopes, it should prompt us to a more passionate solicitude for prolonging our Re-sidence here. Now I appeal to the mean-

elst judgement, vwhether the various sorts of intemperance do not corrupt the habit of our Health, accelerate our decay, and hasten our dissolution. For if they bring not a raging Feaver at present, or a vvorste Contagion, they treasure up matter for the grovvth of more lasting Diseases hereafter. The greater violence vve expose our bodies to, must by the Lavvs of Philosophy be revenged upon us in a shorter duration. Not to mention the dangerous quarrels, vwhich a distempered brain or an amorous heat may engage us in: or hovv vve spoil the Race of mankind, vwhilst vve convey dovvn to our unfortunate posterity a crazy and infected constitution.

Religion it self proposes the contrary Vertues upon this score alone as necessary to the sustaining of our bodies. The Eternal and immutable reason is, that vve are bound to preserve our selves in that state of Beings vwherein vve are placed, till it pleases God to dismiss us: a notion vwhich flourished among the Gentiles.

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Now the particular management requisite to this self-preservation, depends on the peculiar Frame with which every order of Beings is clothed, and so may varie according to the several Classes of them: But to the fabrick of our humane Nature conduces most sobriety, temperance and the rest; which carry no Essential goodness in themselves, because not consisting even amongst us in the same minute proportion; but onely as they advance in us the Universal end, which all Beings according to their several capacities must promote.

Nay further, *Epicurus* the grand Master of irreligion stands on our side. He turned the gods out of his infinite worlds, excluded their providence, and acknowledged nothing higher or finer then Matter; so that we have all the Reason to believe he would onely consult his own Interest. He indeed roundly proclaims it our best and noblest design to gratifie our sence, and thought the most *softish and beastly pleasure* agreeable enough in its self to that purpose: But then holding,

that we must severely weigh all Circumstances, and embrace onely those delights which betray not to a further inconvenience; and even admit that horrid thing pain when it opens the passage to a clearer happiness;

Πάντα τούτα μέσθιν, διὰ τὸ εὖν τοῖς οὐκεῖσι, αἰσθάνεται τὸ μέρος τοῦτο εἴπειν.

Epic. Epist. ad Pythoc.

*Συμπερήγετος γάρ αἱ ἀρεταὶ τοῦτο τὸν πλεῖον τοῦτο τὸν ζῆν
ηδέως τοτεπίστερον δικαίου τοῦτο τὸν πλεῖον τοῦτο τὸν ζῆν*

Ibid.

he at last pronounces that the *only entire, unmixed, and compleat* pleasure lies in the Rules which we call by the name of Virtue. And to this he exactly composed his life, whence Cicero saies of him, we

Itaque, ut sepe dixi, de acumine ejus agitur non de moribus; quamvis spernat voluptates eas quas modò laudavit. Tus. Quæs. l. 3.

*Epist. apud Læsius. l. 3. c. 7. Ιδημ.
τι?στον μὲν εἰς τοὺς πράγματα*

question not Epicurus his manners, but his understanding; because he declines those very pleasures he praises so much. So that there is no ground imaginable left for Luxury.

But if any one sensible of this, does after that example lead a life strict enough, and yet harbours infidelity in his heart; I would represent to him, that seeing it is the same pains to follow Virtue out of a politick con-

sider-

sideration as it is upon a more generous account, what a *huge* and *monstrous* folly must it be to disclaim the hopes or venture the success in another world. The trouble is the same in practice: the difference lies in the choice of the End, which is onely a bare persuasion.

I descend now to the other Branch of my discourse which strikes against profaneness. And this I must accuse first, as the most repugnant in the world to the Genius, the most contrary to the spirit which the least grain of goodness or sense of Religion does induce. For when we consider a supreme Being placed above us, adorned with all excellency, and invested with a compleat happiness, there springs naturally within our mind an honour for him; which consideration alone *Epicurus* thought Argument strong enough for a Divine worship. But then further recollecting that he raised the stately fabrick of the Universe, that he imparted to us our existence and can with

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the same breath recall it again, or, which is worse, continue it in an everlasting misery; as well our gratitude as our fear must excite in us the highest degree of Reverence. This is the primary notion of Religion, upon which all other *sacred Offices* are founded.

Now *Honour* and *Reverence* consist only in a separation from vulgar usage, in setting a greater value upon, in retaining more veneration for one then we commonly do for others. And when applied to a Person, we express the signs of it by a serious mentioning his name with some adjunct of praise, by putting a restraint upon our selves in his presence, by keeping our distance, by addressing to him in a solemn manner: all which are different from our ordinary behaviour among those of our own quality. When ascribed to a thing, we shew our respect by a removal from a Trivial use, by dedicating it wholly to some peculiar service; which indeed we do for the relation it bears to the Person we honour: for as we testify
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our esteem of a Grandee by making a present ; so we offer to God himself what we reserve onely for an Holy employment.

What then shall we think of the profane who lays these enclosures open ? who distinguishes not between Sacred and Common ? A wicked life may disgrace Religion, an Athiest may flyly suggest there is none ; but then we really, then we actually abrogate it , when we disanul those signs, in which the publick Profession of it is seat-ed. Nothing more free, more careless then our usual talk ; nothing more idle then the discourse we spend over our cups : How much then do we undervalue our Eternal Creator, when we mix his Name with such impertinent trifling ? How can we debase or prostitute it more, then when we sea-son our Phrase with it, when we rudely interpose it almost between every word, when it slips so often out of our mouths as we discern it not our selves ? But how much higher does the scorner fly, who is not con-tent to cast off his respect, unless he derides

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what

what he should adore ? who will put an indignity upon God himself, rather then loose a jest ? whom the innumerable Idiotisms and Proverbs of our tongue, suffice not to dash one against the other in his little pretences to wit, unless he plays with and upon the holy Scripture?

I would fain imprint upon our mind a just horrour of this notorious Sin. Let us recall therefore into our memory, what a seriousness possesses us in the *Royal presence* : what a guard we set upon our thoughts : what a silence we impose upon our tongue, or else with what care we deliver every syllable ; let us consider with what modesty we appear in the company of a great Personage : with what troublesome formality we demean our selves. In our converse we are familiar with none but whom we esteem no better then our selves : at least we reckon we are then acquainted, then intimate with our friends when we dare speak any thing before them ; especially we venture to break our conceits, on

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on the inferiours to our own rank: some Philosophers have imagined, all laughter springs from contempt ; and that is the main design of abusive wit. None will offer to do it but towards them they despise : None will endure it but people of a poor, little and flauish temper, whom rich men and haughty entertain among their dependants for the same purpose. The profane then presuming so far with God Almighty, do invade Heaven and seat themselves by his Throne ; 'tis as much as if they declared themselves as *Good* as he : vwhen they treat him like one of their *Dear Companions* 'tis a sign they acknowledge as little distance. Nay what I tremble to speak, they aspire to a degree above him, while they make him and what is appropriated to his Service the subject of their abominable mirth.

And how do we expect God should resent this , vwho has alvvays seemed most jealous of his honour, and vwhenever he takes upon him a Title of severity , 'tis for a just vindication of that. One of the bitterest circum-

stances that attended our Saviours passion lay in the *mockery* vwhich the Soulđiers heaped upon Him; and therefore omitted by none of the Evangelists. They dressed him up in Royal robes that they might make the better sport: they covered his Sacred eyes, that he might by Inspiration tell 'em vwho had presumed to strike him. Among these Cursed vvretches must the profane be numbred, and vwill at last be joyned in the same extremity of torture. God has been alvvays observed to resist the proud, and sure he vwill vwith greater fury oppose those that vwould raise themselves by a depression of Him; so that if Hell contains any place hotter then other: if *Lucifers* apartment be more intolerable then the rest, these vwill be lodged there, vwho certainly have arrived to the very height of vwick-edness.

- III. Secondly, Profanenels must be accounted a vanity vwhich setting aside Religion is the heaviest charge vve can alledge. They may vwell excuse themselves by their infidelity

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lity vwhich if compared vvith this, sinks into a lesser crime. But then to vwhat purpose do they so often repeat the Holy Name if it signifies nothing ? if it denote onely a fiction , vwhy do they fill their mouths vvith an empty vvord ? They may as vvell clap any incoherent syllables together, and fashion one no Language ever ovned , and rattle it out twice or thrice between every sentence. If the sound onely pleases, I fancy they might coin another of a more graceful noise. They make the same use of Oaths and imprecations that others do , whilst they confirm every promise, back each asseveration , enforce every threat , with three or four of them. If then there be no Religion, why do they beat the Air with what implies nothing ? None gives a ny more credit to them, though they damn themselves a thousand times, then as if they had rapt out so much *Arabick*. And what valour is it to scoff at the Religion they have already disclaimed ? They may as well vent their wit against *Jupiter*

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and

and Juno and the rest of the heathen Theology.

III. Thirdly, to be profane is an instance of the greatest rudeness that can be committed in a civil converse. And we may justly complain that men espouse *an ill sort of irreligion*, and upon such base Principles, as destroy all good Nature and affection, which even Atheism naked in its self does not extinguish. For those of old perverted have still maintained an Universal love, an obliging way of demeanour, a Moral honesty, if not upon better grounds yet at least in respect to the necessity of Government: so that the age under *Augustus* which some remark as most infected with this disease, enjoyed a more calm and sedate time then commonly happens. But now men are led into an Apostacy by believing that we are all born mortal enemies one to the other: that each has a design of usurping a Power over the rest: that its onely a little policy that cements us together, which may without blame be broken upon a prospect of

of our Emolument : that there is no tie of gratitude : and that success gives a right to whatever we attempt.

The mischief of all which is that it teaches men to be so indeed : And therefore we may be confident the greatest pleasure the profane take, is to vex and grieve the spirits of sober people ; for commonly they run out the more before them whose Virtue or Profession obliges to be most offended at it. And what savours more an inhumane rustick and clownish temper ? What, though any of them are so unhappy as to think Religion ridiculous and to make it so by their foolery ? yet since so many thousands among whom they live, have the tenderest regard for it, *in civility* they ought to abstain. Is it *good manners* to inveigh against any Person in the presence of one whom we know to be his entire friend and much concerned for his repute ? or *breeding* to fall upon a discourse, which we find unpleasant to one of the company ? If therefore the reverence we owe to God exceed the strongest passion

passion we can cherish for the dearest relation here on earth, what a barbarous thing must it be to mock at anothers devotion? which as often as we undervalue, so many arrows we strike into his soul. And one part of the trouble which a good man receives in this case, is upon our account in charity to us, while he laments the condition vve are in, vwhile he deplores the terrible punishment vve must one day undergo. They were wont formerly to shew their distaste of a profane speech by rending their clothes; which if one should do now as often as he hears any such thing, we might sometimes carry nothing but rags with us to bed. When therefore no other consideration will prevail; if we pretend to understand the *laws of Honour* or the *rules of conversation*, in which we seem to delight so much: if we challenge a *better breeding* then meaner folks, or a more *gentle nature*; we must forbear this unhallovved kind of raillery vwhich offends as many ears as it penetrates.

Thus

Thus have I discharged what I propounded for my Subject: where if I have sometimes argued from places less suitable to the assurance we may well demand for our Faith, it has been onely in compliance to them I would reclaim. I waved it for the present onely that I might expose the mischiefs of those vices taken barely in themselves for the sake of which they reject Religion; hoping that if the ends of a worldly policy could bring them off, they might afterwards do it of their own accord upon a more noble Principle.

There remains onely an humble advice in the Name of God, that we would continue to beware the splitting upon these two Rocks, Debauchery and Profaneness: which we ought more carefully to decline at this time; for since there are so many addicted to them out of irreligion, we shall be interpreted to do so too: by which we sacrifice our own credit and unhappily confirm

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them in their desperate way; for they will think there are so many suffrages the more added to their side. They have been noted to gather Proselytes as much as any Party whatever: and to dive into the mind of others by discourse whether they are not of the same bold opinion with themselves; whereby it appears, they support their timorous hearts more by their company, by their fellows in iniquity then any strength in their Cause.

And that we may be the better armed let us now vvhilst this solemn Exercise has composed our thoughts: vvhilst no temptation hovers before our eyes duly perpend these things; and if satisfied in the truth of them as surely we must, let us use the same Method the Mathematicians do: who having once proved a proposition do not examine it again as often as they have occasion to apply it, but ever after take it for a Maxime and build other Theoremes upon it. So here also being already convinced let

let us set an unmoveable Rule for our whole life. Let not any cajoling pleasure reduce us to an uncertainty, or to dispute the case again: for then vve are sure to be over-throvvn. If once vve be so easie as to admit any sin to plead for it self, by its plausible and fawning excuses it vvill infallibly overcome. There is a great deal of Mechanism in the body; vwhen a pleasant object is presented, there arises a tumult vwithin us vwhether vve vvill or no: the unruly spirits flie in pursuance of it and oppress vwith their numbers the seat of the Understanding; so that vve cannot then fairly deliberate or frame an exact scrutiny, but must move upon some judgement vve have formerly made. We have all experience howv much a fit of anger does transport us beyond the limits of discretion: each *strong inclination* is as truly a passion and does debauch our reason as much, though the same violence does not outvvardly break forth. Let us therefore at any unlawful opportunity not *partly* but *command*.

Let us not be ruled by the thoughts which are then suggested to us, but summon into our mind the apprehensions we have had in such a place and at such a time as this.

In a word, let us remember the Scripture almost always denotes Religion by *the fear of the Lord*, by *the fearing of his Name*, which is for that cause stiled the *beginning of Wisdom*; and that Reverence here is like *modesty in manners*, which if we once discard, no bounds will ever after contain us.

Now to Almighty God, the Father, Son, and holy Spirit, be ascribed all Honour and Praise for ever and ever. Amen.

I cannot forbear by way of Appendix to subjoyn the translation of that most excellent passage cited in Greek, p. 12, out of *Plato de leg.* where he thus accosts the young hectoring Atheist.

My son, you are yet but a young man : In process of time you will come to change for the quite contrary many of those Opinions you now espouse. Stay therefore till then, before you determine of great affairs ; and the greatest of all, which perhaps you imagine not, is the framing of a right Notion concerning the gods, because on this depends the choice of a Wicked or a Virtuous life. Now I'll discover one thing to you which I may truly enough affirm : And it is this ; You and your Camerades are not the first nor the only persons which have had this desperate Sentiment concerning the gods. There have been always more or less, those that have fallen into this disease. But I may tell you what has happened to most of them ;

Never

*Never did any take up in his youth
the denial of the Existence of a God,
that carried the same mind with him
to his declining age.*

Those Verses of *Laertius*, cited p. 13. upon *Bion* the Atheist, who falling sick in his old age applied himself in Prayers and Sacrifices to the gods, whom he had always before derided; may thus be rendred.

*A Fool, to think th' Existence of the gods
Could for a price be bought or sold :
As if forsooth they onely then should Be
When Bion pleased so to hold.*

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